

VA Medical Center, Aspinwall Division
Administration Building (Building No. 32)
5103 Delafield Avenue
Aspinwall Vicinity
Allegheny County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5438-K

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

VA MEDICAL CENTER
ASPINWALL DIVISION, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building No. 32)

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Location: The Administration Building is located in the northwest quadrant of the hospital complex, west of the end of the main entry drive. The Medical Center is located at 5103 Delafield Avenue, Aspinwall vicinity, O'Hara Township, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

USGS Pittsburgh East Quadrangle. Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 17.594100.4483140

Present Owner: United States Veterans Administration

Present Occupant: United States Veterans Administration

Present Use: Veterans Hospital

Significance: The Administration Building is associated with the continued growth and expansion of the veterans' hospital at Aspinwall. Constructed in 1938, the building housed the facility's administrative offices, which were removed to this building from the Infirmary Building. The Administration Building was constructed from designs prepared by the Public Works Administration (PWA) and is perhaps the most architecturally sophisticated building at the Aspinwall facility. It utilizes the Georgian Revival style design palette that characterized all construction at the hospital, but the level of detail is significantly greater than at the site's other buildings, including the Infirmary Building. The Administration Building reflects the expansion of Veterans Administration facilities that occurred throughout the nation during the decades between World War I and World War II, and is indicative of the growth of the Aspinwall facility during this period.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: 1938
2. Architect/Engineer: United States Veterans Administration.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: United States Veterans Administration.
4. Builders, contractors, suppliers: Public Works Administration.
5. Original plans and construction: United States Veterans Administration.
6. Alterations and additions: The mechanical systems associated with the Administration Building have recently been upgraded. Dropped ceilings with recessed lighting has been installed throughout the building. An asbestos roof was installed in 1965. Minor interior alterations were made for the provision of nursing education spaces in 1967. The original lobby has been subdivided into a copy room, office space, and vestibule. Aluminum replacement windows have been installed throughout. A wheelchair ramp was installed on the east side in the early 1980s.

- B. Historical Context: The Administration Building was erected in 1938 for the Aspinwall V.A. Medical Complex in conjunction with the Public Works Administration as a public works project. The Administration Building was to fulfill the administrative duties of the hospital which up to this time were centered in the Infirmary Building. In 1937 the Pittsburgh Regional Office of the V.A. was combined with and moved to the Aspinwall complex. The added demand created by this move and concurrent expansion of the Infirmary required a shift of administrative duties into a separate facility.

Over time the building has continued to function in an administrative capacity and continues to do so currently.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Georgian Revival.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Two-story cruciform plan building measuring approximately 36 feet by 150 feet with a 14-foot by 36-foot portico on the front, east, facade and a 19-foot by 36-foot projecting bay on the rear, west, facade. The basement is slightly raised on the east facade and fully exposed on the west facade.
2. Foundations: Reinforced concrete.
3. Walls: Structural tile with exterior brick veneer.
4. Structural systems, framing: One-way concrete slab construction including columns, beams and flooring.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: A raised, fully pedimented portico projects from the center of the east facade. It is supported by four, two-story, Doric columns on granite bases. The pediment consists of a simple cornice with dentils, a plain freeze, a plain architrave. A fanlight, complete with keystone, is centered within the tympanum. Concrete wheelchair ramp with brick cheek walls constructed against east facade ca. 1980.
6. Chimneys: The north and south gable ends of the building are broken by false brick chimneys with concrete capping.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The principal building entry on the east facade consists of a scrolled broken pediment with ornamental pineapple supported by an entablature and Doric pilasters. A two-panel door with nine lights is surrounded by a five-light transom and narrow three-light sidelights.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Windows are non-original, aluminum double casements with fixed transom sash. Window openings have concrete sills and brick jack arches with concrete keystones. Wood fanlights set into soldier course arches with concrete keystones are located in each gable end below the chimneys.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Asbestos-shingled gable roof with intersecting hipped and gabled pavilions.

- b. Cornice, eaves: Simple wood box cornice with returns on gable ends. The raking cornice within the gables is broken by the chimney stack.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: Four pedimented dormers with keystones flanked by doric pilasters are located on both sides of the main gable. Arched dormer windows have fixed upper sash with segmentally arched muntins, and operable six-light lower awning sash. Dormer sides are sheathed with slate roofing tiles.

An octagonal cupola on square wood base with wood quoins is centered on the main roof in line with the cross gables. The east and west elevations of the base have round windows with wagon wheel muntins and keystones in each quadrant of the compass. The cupola is constructed of sheet metal cladding atop a wooden substructure. Four narrow, arched windows, consisting of a single pane surrounded by a multiple-light band, are flanked by pilasters and topped by keystones. The cupola's octagonal dome springs from a simple box cornice. The whole is capped by a small lightning rod spire.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor Plans: The basement, first, and second floors have longitudinal double-loaded corridors. Offices accessed from these corridors are largely open plan, with few partitions.
- 2. Stairways: Metal stairs with composition treads and wood hand rails.
- 3. Flooring: Terrazzo floor and baseboards.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finishes: Painted plaster walls, modern dropped ceilings with recessed lighting.
- 5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Steel door frames, some with original wood doors with ventilation grates near bottom of door.
 - b. Windows: Window trim is molded from the edge of the existing wall surface.
- 6. Decorative features and trim: Cove cornice with remnants of decorative pilaster capitals visible behind new partitions in

vestibule. Remnants of marble facing of columns and pilasters are also visible.

7. Hardware: Brass and aluminum.
8. Mechanical equipment: Heating, air conditioning, lighting and plumbing have been modernized since 1970.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The front facade faces east and runs parallel to the site's formal entry drive. The building is surrounded by shade trees, shrubbery, and a lawn that slopes away from the west, rear, facade.
2. Historic landscape design: The building and its landscaping were placed within the existing 1924 landscape design, which created a campus-like setting of buildings, lawns, and tree-lined walks and roads. The building's landscaping is wholly compatible with the original design.
3. Outbuildings: None.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: Located at Engineering Services, VA Medical Center, Oakland Division, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- B. Early Views: Located at Engineering Services, VA Medical Center, Oakland Division, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- C. Interviews: Personnel, United States Veterans Administration Medical Center, Aspinwall Division, D'Hara Township, Pennsylvania.
- D. Bibliography:
 1. Primary and unpublished sources:

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Historic Architectural Drawings -- Aspinwall Facility. Various files held at Engineering Services, VA Medical Center, Oakland Division, Pittsburgh, PA.

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25 Anniversary: Veterans Administration Hospital, Aspinwall, Pennsylvania (1950). Pamphlet on file at Engineering Services, VA Medical Center, Oakland Division, Pittsburgh, PA.

2. Secondary and published sources:

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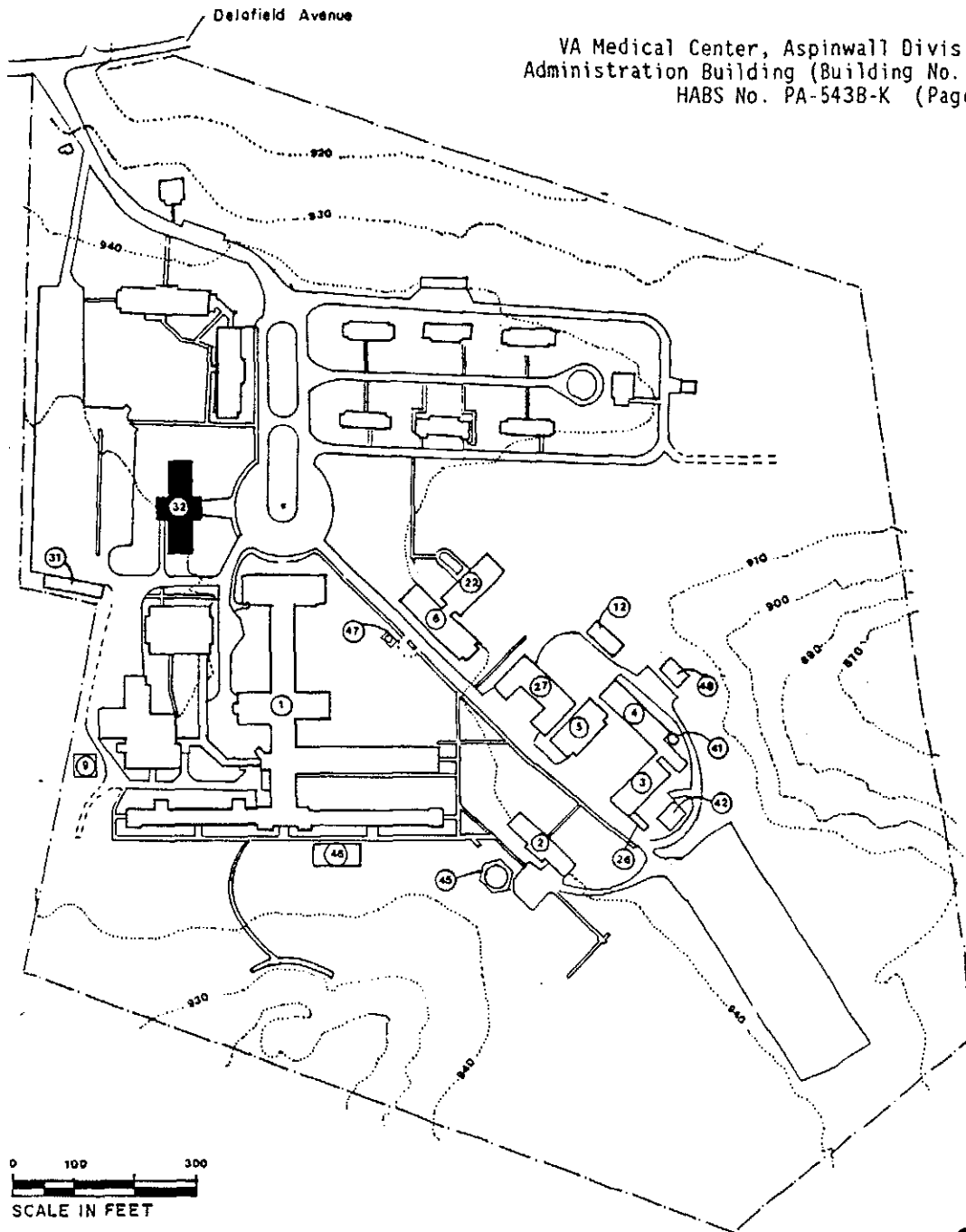
Part IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was undertaken in July 1989 in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the United States Veterans Administration, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative measure prior to the demolition of the subject buildings at the Aspinwall Division Medical Center.

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September 1989

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